DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 381 289 PS 023 239

AUTHOR McGrath, Emily P.; Repetti, Rena L.
TITLE Parents' Attitudes toward Their Children's Academic Performance and Children's Perceptions of Their Academic Competence.
PUB DATE Mar 95
NOTE 4p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (61st, Indianapolis, IN, March 30-April 2, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; *Educational Attitudes; Elementary Secondary Education; Family Influence; Grades (Scholastic); *Parent Attitudes; Parent Student Relationship; *Self Evaluation (Individuals); *Student Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Parent Expectations

ABSTRACT

A study examined parents' satisfaction with their children's school performance and parents' value for their children's academic success as variables that may influence children's perceptions of academic success or failure. Parents' values (parents n=240) were assessed with a ten-item paired-comparison scale made up of five value items. Children's perceptions of their academic competence (children n=179) were measured with the seven-item Perceived Competence Scale, with the children's report card grades serving as indicators of actual academic performance. Results of analysis indicated that parents' satisfaction with their children's school performance was associated with children's perceptions of academic competence, independent of children's actual school performance. Parents who valued academic success had children who perceived themselves to be academically competent. However, this general positive association masked important differences between highly competent children and children who were doing poorly in school. Among children who were doing well in school, having parents who placed more importance on academic success was associated with somewhat lower perceptions of academic competence. Among the bottom third of the class, however, having parents who placed more importance on academic success was associated with somewhat higher perceptions of academic competence. In general, the data suggest that parents' attitudes toward their children's academic performance may directly, or indirectly, shape children's perceptions of their academic competence. (HTH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Poster presented at the 1995 Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development. Indianapolis, IN.

ED 381 289

Parents' Attitudes Toward Their Children's Academic Performance and Children's Perceptions of Their Academic Competence

Emily P. McGrath and Rena L. Repetti
Department of Psychology
University of California, Los Angeles

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Abstract

How do parents influence children's perceptions of their academic competence? This study examined parents' satisfaction with their children's performance in school and parents' values for their children's academic success as variables that may influence children's perceptions of academic success or failure. Data from children (n=179) and parents (n=240) were consistent with the general hypothesis that parents play a central role in shaping children's perceptions of their academic competence. Parents' satisfaction with their children's performance in school, independent of their children's actual academic performance, correlated with children's perceptions of their academic abilities. Parents' values were also associated with children's perceptions of academic success or failure.

Introduction

Children's negative evaluations of their academic abilities can lead to a range of undesirable outcomes, such as underachievement (Phillips & Zimmerman, 1990; Weisz, 1983), depression (Weisz, Weiss, Wasserman, & Rintoul, 1987), and attenuated achievement goals (Harter, 1983). Parents are believed to exert a substantial influence over their children's self-perceptions of ability (Parsons, Adler, & Kaczala, 1982; Phillips, 1987). This study explores the relationship between parents' attitudes toward their children's academic performance and children's perceptions of their academic competence. Two indicators of parents' attitudes toward their children's academic performance were examined: parents' level of satisfaction with their children's academic performance and the extent to which parents value academic success for their children.

Method

The data presented here were collected as part of a larger longitudinal study of stress and family development. Parents' satisfaction with their children's school performance was assessed by a single item that asked parents to rate how satisfied they were with their child's grades in school. Parents' values were assessed with a 10-item paired-comparison scale made up of five value items. Children's perceptions of their academic competence were measured with the seven-item Perceived Competence Scale (Harter, 1982). Children's grades on report-cards served as indicators of children's actual academic performance.

PS 023239

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Emily McGrath
Rena Repetti
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Results

Parents' Satisfaction

Parents' level of satisfaction with their children's school performance positively correlated with children's perceptions of their academic competence ($r=.31$, $p<.001$). A simultaneous multiple regression analysis tested the first hypothesis that *parents' level of satisfaction with their children's school performance, independent of their children's actual school performance, correlates with children's self-perceptions of academic competence*. Parents' satisfaction with their children's school grades made significant independent contributions to children's perceptions of their own academic abilities ($B=.23$, $p<.01$). Parents who were more satisfied with their children's school performance had children who perceived themselves to be academically competent.

Parents' Values

A correlational analysis tested the second hypothesis that *parents who value academic success have children who perceive themselves to be academically competent.* There was a low, but significant, correlation between parents' values for academic success and children's perceptions of academic competence ($r=.17$, $p<.05$). Parents who placed more importance on academic success had children who perceived themselves to be academically competent.

A correlational analysis tested the final hypothesis that *among children who are doing well in school, the more importance parents place on academic success the less academically competent their children feel.* Children who scored above the median for their grade in both math and reading ($n=35$) were categorized as children who were doing well in school. Within this group, there was a marginally significant negative correlation between parents' academic values and children's perceptions of their academic competence ($r = -.25$, $p=.07$). In comparison, among children who scored below the median for their grade in both reading and math ($n=52$), there was a positive correlation between parents' academic values and children's perceptions of their academic competence ($r=.23$, $p=.04$).

Summary

1) Parents' satisfaction with their children's school performance was associated with children's perceptions of academic competence, independent of children's actual school performance.

2) Parents who valued academic success had children who perceived themselves to be academically competent. However, this general positive association masked important differences between highly competent children and children who were doing poorly in school. Among children who were doing well in school, having parents who placed more importance on academic success was associated with somewhat *lower* perceptions of academic competence. Among the bottom third of the class, on the other hand, having parents who placed more importance on academic success was associated with somewhat *higher* perceptions of academic competence.

The data suggest that parents' attitudes toward their children's academic performance may directly, or indirectly, shape children's perceptions of their academic competence.

References

Harter, S. (1982). The perceived competence scale for children. *Child Development, 53*, 87-97.

Harter, S. (1983). Competence as a dimension of self-evaluation: Toward a comprehensive model of self-worth. In R. Leahy (Ed.), *The development of the self* (pp. 55-121). New York: Academic Press.

Parsons, J. E. Adler, T. G., & Kaczala, C. (1982). Socialization of achievement attitudes and beliefs: Parental influences. *Child Development, 53*, 310-321.

Phillips, D. A. (1987). Socialization of perceived academic competence among highly competent children. Child Development, 58, 1308-1320.

Phillips, D. A. & Zimmerman, M. (1990). The developmental course of perceived competence and incompetence among competent children. In R. Sternberg and J. Kolligian (Eds.), Competence considered (pp. 41 66). New Haven, Yale University Press. .

Weisz, J. R. (1983). Can I control it? The pursuit of veridical answers across the life span. In P. Baltes (Ed.), Life-span development and behavior (Vol. 5, pp. 233-300). New York: Academic Press.

Weiss, J. R., Weiss, B., Wasserman, A. A., & Rintoul, B. (1987). Control-related beliefs and depression among clinic referred children and adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 96*, 58-63.